

ROMANS 9:1-5 (Part 1)

(Luke 14:13) Invite to the banquet (work in)

This week our text is Romans 9:1-5. Next week we are going to begin a study into doctrinal themes that appear in Romans nine. One of the topics we will discuss is predestination and God's sovereignty. If there are related questions you would like addressed in coming weeks, please let me know as soon as you can. Read the text and call me with your questions.

“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- ²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

Three times Paul assures his readers he is telling the truth.

“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit...”

Paul, who was a Jewish Pharisee, spent most of his time ministering to people who were not Jewish. The bible calls non-Jewish people “Gentiles”. Some Jewish people who converted to Christianity might have wondered if Paul was rejecting everything and everyone Jewish. Paul emphasized three times that his love for the Jewish people was genuine.

In verses two and three Paul makes some remarkable statements. First he says he has **“great sorrow and unceasing anguish in [his] heart.”** In chapter eight Paul was excited and victorious when we said to the Christian Church we are **“*more than conquerors through Christ.*”** But suddenly Paul says that he carries around a terrible burden of sorrow and continual anguish.

In our lives we react with sorrow and anguish to many things. We react with sorrow and anguish because of marital and relationship problems. And we react with

sorrow and anguish because we have spent many hours praying for someone who in the end refuses to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And we react with sorrow and anguish when things turn sour at our job. These things can weight heavy on us, but in the middle of our struggles we can still celebrate the truth that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

In this life we will always have struggles because we live in a spiritual war zone. Like the apostle Paul we will always live with a tension of both sorrow and joy. We will always have sorrow in this life, but the key is to hang on to the joy at the same time. If we focus on only the sorrow and anguish we become like people who have no hope. But if we pretend we have no difficulties we become pretenders that cannot relate to other people.

What was the sorrow Paul had for the Israelites? Verse three tells us,

“For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

The sorrow Paul feels for Israel is that they rejected Jesus Christ, their own Messiah. And the way Paul expresses his regret is astonishing.

There is nothing more important to a person than the state of their soul. Yet, Paul says, if it were possible, he would surrender his soul to hell so that Israel could be saved.

This offer by Paul is similar to Moses when, after the golden calf incident, Moses says to God in *Exodus 32* ***“But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”*** Moses and Paul share this self-sacrificing love for their people.

Paul did not reject or hate the people of Israel. Paul was a preacher to the *Gentiles* because the Jews had refused to hear him and because God had called him to minister to the Gentiles.

In verse four, Paul highlights the incredible irony that Jesus Christ, was, for the most part, rejected by His fellow Jews. For two thousand years God did many things to prepare the Jewish people to receive Jesus Christ The Messiah. Here are some of the ways God had prepared the Israelites to receive Jesus Christ The Messiah.

The first thing given to the Jews comes in verse four when Paul calls the Jews ***“the people of Israel.”*** The term “Israelite” is used in the New Testament to “designate the special relation to God that the Jews enjoyed as the chosen people of the Lord.”

The second special thing given to the Jews is, ***“adoption as sons.”*** Israel as a nation is the child of God. ***Hosea 11:1*** says, ***“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*** Yet, when this adopted son of God, Israel, come in contact with Jesus Christ The Son of God, they, in a manner of speaking, murdered their brother.

A third special thing given to Israel is ***“the divine glory...”*** Of all the nations of the earth, only Israel was given the unspeakable honor of having the manifested presence of God’s glory—the Shekinah glory of God present in the tabernacle and in the temple. The fire number for the manifested bright glory of God was; Israel. Yet, when Jesus Christ, who is the brightest and full expression of the glory of God showed up, they crucified him. Do you hear the irony there?

A fourth thing God did to prepare Israel to receive Jesus Christ The Messiah is found in ***“the covenants.”*** Of all the nations of the earth, God established his covenants with the Jews. These covenants with Abraham and David and through Moses marked Israel as God’s elect people—the one He established a formal, covenant relationship with. Yet when Jesus showed up with a new covenant, they turned their back on Him.

The fifth thing God had given to the Jews to prepare them for the arrival of Jesus Christ The Messiah is ***“the receiving of the law.”*** In The Law, the Jews had the most perfect expression of God’s character found anywhere. Yet when Jesus came as ***the fulfillment of the law***, they twisted his laws so they could kill him. Do you hear the painful irony of this turn of events as Paul lists them?

The Sixth thing God gave Israel to prepare them for the coming Messiah was ***“the temple worship and the promises.”*** Israel alone was instructed in the proper manner to worship the Lord through the giving of sacrifices in God’s holy temple. Yet, when Jesus Christ appeared as the perfect sacrifice—the sacrifice to which every other temple sacrifice pointed, the Jews spurned Him.

A seventh thing given to the Israelites to prepare them for the arrival of Jesus Christ The Messiah was the ***“Fathers”*** of Israel. Abraham is the Father of the Jewish

race. Yet 2000 years later when the “seed of Abraham,” Jesus Christ came to earth, the other descendants of Abraham put Him on a cross. That’s what Paul meant when he said about the Jews, ***“through them is traced the human ancestry of Christ.”***

It was Jewish blood that coursed through the veins of Jesus Christ and it was Jewish blood that was shed for our sins and it was Jews who on a human level spilled His blood.

Paul names all of these things given to Israel to prepare this blessed people to receive Jesus Christ. And the unspeakable irony is that these people who have been so carefully, methodically prepared to receive the Messiah, when he actually came to them—some did not recognize him and some did not care. They put Him to death on a cross. This is the reason Paul had ***“great sorrow and unceasing anguish in [his] heart.”***

For a moment, try to put yourself in the place of those Jews who HAD accepted Christ and who were reading Paul’s letter up to this point. Try to feel what they would have felt. They were part of a race that God began in Abraham 2000 years before Christ. God had given them all these special blessings to prepare his people for the coming of the Messiah. And when he finally came, the Jews reject Him. But MORE THAN THAT, who is it that comes to Christ in droves? The Gentiles!

So let me get this straight. The Jews have been prepared for 2000 years to receive Jesus Christ The Messiah. They were given the Fathers, the Covenants, The glory of God, The temple worship and all kinds of special things to get them ready to receive and deeply appreciate Jesus Christ when he came. But now gentiles, people who were not prepared in any special way were the ones who were receiving and loving and accepting Jesus Christ The Messiah. Many Jewish people called gentiles dogs because God did not bless them. They did not know God. They worshipped false gods.

But now through Jesus Christ these Gentile people will now have a place in heaven in the bosom of Abraham while so many Jews, God’s chosen people will suffer eternal torment in hell.

Paul describes this dynamic, quoting ***Isaiah 10:20***. ***“I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”*** Can you imagine how a Christian Jew might have felt toward the reality that it was the Gentiles, not the Jews who were receiving the blessings of Abraham? And so their response to this

dilemma was to conclude that the word of God—those Old Testament promises of blessing to the Jews were just plain wrong. That is, the promises of God to Israel that they would be blessed through the Messiah were no good—God’s word had not told the truth. The Messiah had come and the Jews did not receive the blessings they were promised.

That introduction opens the door to the study of the rest of Romans nine. The rest of Romans nine is Paul’s explanation of why many Jews rejected their own Messiah. And that is really the point of Romans 9-11. We will study side matters that appear in the text. But we can’t lose sight of the main argument Paul is setting up.

APPLICATION

Just like the Christian Jews of Rome some of us might be tempted to look down on lowly people who come to faith in Christ. How will we view them? Hey, that person has drank all their life and burned through three marriages, but now he comes to Christ. He can’t possibly be used by God in the same way that Christ can use me, can he?

Sometimes without thinking about it we form classes of people in the church just like some of the Jews did. When a really poor person who does not have a lot of education comes to Christ we tolerate that person instead of fully embracing that person and moving toward them in complete friendship. After all, they do not know as much as we do about the bible. After all, they don’t speak as well as the rest of us. After all, they don’t have the same skills as us. I didn’t hang around people like him or her in high school so I am not going to start now. The truth of the gospel is that no matter how cleaned up or goofy a person is, if they receive Jesus Christ, they are now a full blood brother or sister through our common adoption in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Some Jews were shocked and jealous of Gentiles. How could these dogs be welcome into God’s family? They did not grow up studying the bible. They did all kinds of nasty things in their past. But God called a people who were not his people. So what are you and I doing to reach out to someone and have dinner with someone and be good friends with someone who comes from a different background than we do? When is the last time you had someone different than you hang out with you in a fishing boat or in your back yard?

Another thing that stands out to me is the grief felt by Paul. Paul was grieved over those who rejected Jesus Christ. You can tell something about your heart by the things that cause you sorrow and anguish. In this life often we can be so insecure or self absorbed that we grieve over things that are not worth grieving over. I have seen people grieve and have an all out hissy fit because someone did not return her wave when they did not see her. I have seen the grief of death come over people when the kids don't go fast enough, or the car does not start. I have seen the grief of death come over people because someone misunderstood our words or because someone had a different opinion. I have seen the grief of death come over individuals who did not get their steak cooked the way they wanted it.

Grown up mature Christians who have the heart of Jesus Christ save their deepest grief for the things worth grieving about. We are given this life to bring glory to Jesus Christ. When individuals refuse to bring glory to Jesus, the very purpose of that person's life is rejected. Their life is now meaningless. And that is worth grieving.

When they lose their job, when their child dies, when their spouse leaves or dies—there is NOTHING of eternal good that will come to them from that—not ONE thing as long as they refuse to glorify Jesus Christ? They have pain as deep as we often experience, but there is no real hope for them.

At the judgment of Christ, we will not have to stand weak kneed and terrorized before the Holy Judge of the universe. For that we rejoice. But do we also feel the anguish that comes from thinking about what that moment will be like for those outside of Christ?

As we rejoice in the glorious truth that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, do we consider what it is like for those who have never truly experienced the life-giving love of God? The Christian cannot conceptualize what it must be like to live a life, hour-by-hour, day by day, year by year with no sense of God's love and acceptance. The lost have only the shallow, hollow, counterfeit peace that comes only when things are going their way. Can we say along with Paul that in Christ we are more than conquerors, while at the same time we feel ***“great sorrow and unceasing anguish in [our] hearts”*** for those who do not know him or glorify him?

The answer to that question is found in the time and energy and tears that are spent praying, witnessing, and weeping for the lost.

TAKING IT HOME

1. What are you doing to become friends with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are different than you?
2. What are the things that have caused you anguish that in light of eternity is not really that serious?
3. When is the last time you felt deep anguish and tears over those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ?